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Engaging Young People in International Affairs

Working group recommendations from a symposium held on November 15-16, 2001

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One of the lessons of September 11th is that people in the United States need to pay much more attention to the

other 96 percent of the world's population. That is particularly important for our students and younger citizens who soon will be our leaders.

This symposium pulled together student leaders from four campuses, plus other distinguished participants such as former Congressman John Anderson. There is a clear receptivity to the idea of greater interest and activity.

But how do we get there?

This folder provides some concrete recommendations that we hope will interest you. Even better, stimulate you to act. And to come up with more and better ideas.

Insensitivity to the rest of the world should have died on September 11th. But did it? You and I have to help provide the answer to that question.

Paul Simon
Director, Public Policy Institute
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Recommendations

► *To develop a more concerned and internationally sensitive public, we recommend the following actions, which individually and especially as a mosaic, will reach the general population and particularly younger people who soon will be shaping the future of our nation and our world:*

- In order to more fully recognize our history and identity as a diverse and multicultural nation and fulfill our role as a global leader, school boards and administrators should encourage the development of an internationally sensitive curriculum, including teaching foreign language at all levels and geography. In addition, such a curriculum should infuse international affairs, cultural and human rights into the teaching of courses such as history, literature, religion and government. Federal and state grant programs should be developed to implement foreign language study in elementary schools.
- School boards and school administrators should consider supporting a program in which teachers in each elementary, middle school and high school would select one teacher in their school building each year to receive funding for travel and/or study during the summer recess in a developing nation or a more developed country. In most cases, this would cost less than 1 percent of a school budget and would recognize outstanding teachers and enrich the school curriculum.
- All colleges and universities, as well as high schools, should participate in the Model UN programs. Groups like the UN Association and World Federalists should have access to the names and addresses of these students to encourage follow-up and continued interest in the UN and international affairs.
- Universities and colleges should reach out to elementary and high schools near their campuses to offer their international students as guest speakers for classes. International studies programs at universities should send a letter to all local schools advertising programs that would bring interna-



John Anderson
1980 U.S. Presidential Candidate

tional students to speak at schools. U.S. students who have traveled and/or studied abroad could also enrich and encourage students through similar appearances.

- The Health Corps proposed by Sen. William Frist of Tennessee should be expanded to include non-medical personnel and the Peace Corps should also be expanded. Senator Frist should be commended for his proposal.
- Groups like the Rotary International that provide international exchanges should be applauded.
- Wherever possible, assistance to college students who wish to study and travel abroad should be provided – including internships and service learning. Such opportunities should be well-publicized and appropriate academic credit should be given.
- Opportunities for students at colleges and universities to enter into on-campus discussion and other interactions with international students should be provided and effectively promoted and marketed.
- Universities should do more to promote foreign language study *and should seriously consider requiring at least two years of foreign language study.*



Paul Simon leads the Panel discussion as SIU Students Tony Barger and Molly Parker listen closely.

- The media should be pressed to correct their appalling lack of international coverage. The lack of coverage is a deterrent to responsible citizenship. Educational leaders, including students, should communicate their concerns to media decision-makers.
- Colleges and universities should include a significant international emphasis in their journalism curriculum.
- Credit courses about the UN system and other forms of multi-lateral organization and cooperation should be provided by colleges and universities.



John Anderson contributes to the working group as Paul Simon looks on.

- Week-long summer programs with an international emphasis for high school students can be good recruitment devices for universities and at the same time inspire young people.
- The U.S. Congress and state legislative bodies should adopt resolutions encouraging colleges and universities to expand their study-abroad programs.
- For-credit group trips abroad should be multiplied.
- The alumni associations of colleges and universities or entities within such schools, like the Public Policy Institute, should write letters to the parents of graduating seniors suggesting that if they wish to make a meaningful gift to the graduate, and if they can afford it, one of the finest things they could provide that would have significance for the remainder of that person's life would be a trip to other nations.
- Colleges and universities should develop a course to be included in *Requirements for Guidance Endorsement* that focuses on international work, career opportunities and service that are available to high school students directly after graduation. At the very least, colleges and universities should provide a one- or two-day seminar for high school guidance counselors suggesting ways that counseling can encourage international sensitivity and awareness of international career opportunities for students.
- Through the Corporation for National Service and in partnership with Coleman McCarthy's Center for Peace Teaching, bring volunteers (largely retired Peace Corps volunteers, military veterans, foreign service personnel and immigrants) to teach twice-monthly courses on international issues in classes covering kindergarten through high school. A standardized curriculum should be developed.

- We need to intensify our efforts to continue attracting to the United States students from overseas. Over the last 20 years, America's share of international students has fallen from 40 percent to 30 percent.
- We should welcome teachers and volunteers from throughout the world for one- or two-year tours of duty in the U.S as part of a reciprocal Peace Corps program. The volunteers need not be limited to service in public schools; they could also serve at community colleges, universities and community organizations, such as Boys Clubs and Girls Clubs.
- Universities and colleges should establish an international volunteer program that would provide either a practicum credit/and or an international volunteer certificate for students who contribute at least 30 hours of services.
- State governments should be urged to issue orders similar to a federal executive memorandum that states, "It is the policy of the federal government to support international education."



(from L-R) Jennifer Lyell, Mogens Madsen, Andy Meissen.

- SIU – and other universities – should seriously consider requiring international affairs classes.
- The political science department should direct that majors in the international affairs sequence participate in internship programs with international organizations – preferably overseas.
- Universities should reach out to business organizations and associations (for example, the Conference Board) to create opportunities and funding for hands-on international experiences for students, faculty and administrators.
- Media services that provide good global coverage should give free electronic subscriptions for students.



(from L-R) Argus Tong, Carrie Wildman.

- Colleges and universities should set the explicit goal of having every graduate participate in at least one substantive international experience – including travel, service, internships – and they should better coordinate and publicize these opportunities.
- An organization should develop and publish on the web a list of opportunities and funding sources for international experiences keyed to specific age ranges as well as internationally relevant syllabi and course materials for educators.
- Youth-focused travel agencies should be located in student unions.



(from L-R) Andy Meissen, Adam Ortiz, Christopher Robertson.